

"The tourism industry in the Gulf states alone contributes around \$13 billion toward the nation's GDP," Rep. Farr said before the president's Tuesday evening speech. "If we're going to protect those who have been harmed by this oil spill, we must address the damage done to the travel and tourism industry."

The text of the letter follows:

President Barack Obama

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

Washington, D.C. 20015

Dear President Obama:

As you encourage British Petroleum to set aside additional revenue to pay out claims for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, we implore you to highlight the need for economic relief for the tourism industry and compel BP to pay for lost wages for the hundreds and thousands of Gulf Coast residents whose livelihoods have been affected by the oil spill.

Tourists come to the Gulf Coast region for the pristine beaches and recreation activities, fresh seafood and to experience the unique coastal culture. They spend billions of dollars, mostly in small businesses, that cater to recreation and outdoor activities; in local restaurants, hotels and motels; and in myriad other segments that comprise the travel and tourism industry. Across the region, the economic wellbeing of whole communities reliant on tourism are under immediate threat at a time that is traditionally the height of their earnings.

When Secretary of Commerce Locke was in the Gulf region last week, holding meetings with travel and tourism officials in New Orleans, Mobile and Biloxi, he said, "We need to counter that misperception that the area is just covered with oil. There's no need to cancel vacations, trips, conventions and outings, and a lot of the jobs in the hospitality sector are being affected unnecessarily."

In your nationally televised remarks tonight, we ask that you do three things:

- Talk about the impact of the oil spill on the tourism industry.
- Let Americans know the Gulf Coast tourism industry is open for business.
- Compel BP to expeditiously process claims for economic relief for tourism and related industries.

Finally, please consider taking your family vacation in the Gulf Coast region. Your presence will send a signal to hard-working Americans devastated by the worst oil spill in our nation' s history that they are not forgotten.

Sincerely,

Sam Farr

Co-Chair

Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus

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